

20 July 1970

63

SPECIAL INFORMATION REPORTDirection of the Antiwar Movement

In June two national meetings were held in the U.S. by leaders in the antiwar movement. Significant events took place both at Cleveland and at Milwaukee, largely missed by news media, which give salient evidence with regard to future antiwar activities in America.

First the National Emergency Conference Against the Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam War was staged at Cuyahoga Community College under the sponsorship of the Cleveland Area Peace Action Council. The conference was held from 18-21 June and attracted about 1,400 activists. Among the sponsors were such well-known revolutionaries as M. I. T.'s professor Noam Chomsky, black radical clown Dick Gregory and Trotskyite communist Fred Halstead. Representatives were present from a number of small second string radical leftist groups including the National Chicago Moratorium, the San Francisco Peace and Freedom Party, Chicago Women's Liberation Union, Workers League and the Spartacists. The latter two groups reportedly created some comic relief by their incessant bickering and name-calling over trivial ideological differences.

The principal and most significant breach in conference unity was perpetrated by the two leading groups which indulged in a three-day running battle over both tactic and objective. These two groups, the Student Mobe and the Worker Student Alliance (which was out-gunned by about 2:1) exchanged denunciation and angry rhetoric. Since the Student Mobe (inspite of announced conference sponsorship) was the principal conference mover, they managed to out-vote the WSA on all critical votes.

In summary (and over-simplified) the Student Mobe is the creation of exceedingly strange bedfellows. Several years ago the CPUSA, the Progressive Labor Party (which is Maoist) and the SWP (which is Trotskyite) jointly launched what was to be, for classical communist motives, a mass antiwar youth group that promised to

attract many young people falling somewhere on the political spectrum between extreme left and mid-center. After a year or so of hassling and ideological indigestion, the CPUSA dropped out of the alliance in favor of buoying up its own, then sagging and now defunct, W. E. B. DuBois Club. A short time later, after a number of successes in takeover operations of the SDS, PLP also quit the shaky alliance. For the past several years then the Student Mobe has been under sole guidance and control of the SWP. The Young Socialist Alliance, the direct youth appendage of the SWP and in Marxist jargon the youth vanguard (numbering at present probably 2,000 kids), directs the activities of the Student Mobe; and YSA'ers occupy all significant leadership posts within this broad-based group. In practical terms then, as for guidance and direction, when one sees in print Student Mobe, it is safe to think Marx-Trotsky-SWP.

The WSA can more completely be named the Students for a Democratic Society, Progressive Labor, Worker Student Alliance (SDS-PL, WSA). Drawing its principal strength (in terms of constituency) generally in New England, the WSA dropped the first bomb at Chicago in the summer of 1969 that destroyed the national unity and viability of the then mushrooming SDS. The WSA is Maoist in philosophy and still holds strongly to the Marxist teaching that to pull off a successful revolution a movement must attract and conscript the worker (defined as rank-and-file as opposed to labor leaders which the SWP favors).

The conflict then that poses a very serious threat to the unity of the communist-cum-peacenik movement in America is simply one of strong and dogmatic ideological collision. One of the SWP watchwords is patience, another is "single issue strategy." It is the SWP design to first use their mass of kids (the Student Mobe), a known factor, for continued mass demonstration similar to last November's successful turnout at Washington (and lesser but still good show at San Francisco) and keep it peaceful in the hope of attracting even larger numbers of tilting moderates who would be turned off by violence. Secondly, the SWP leaders adhere (and usually have in the past) to a single issue at a time. They view America's soft spot at present as Southeast Asia and that is the wound that should get the salt. Student Mobe leaders (really YSA'ers) have publicly conceded that once they have ended the war they'll pick another target, then another until patient pressure brings the nation down on the heads of those who control the means of production. The SWP, in order to reach the long-term goal, further subscribes to the classic United Front philosophy. If liberal politicians help one whit they should be used co-opted or not.

The WSA is at odds with SWP thinking. First at the risk of isolating the antiwar movement, they regard liberal politicians as just the other side of the conservative coin. They lean toward a confrontation with violence strategy, scuttling the mass demonstration tactic because they believe as do most antiwar activists outside the echelons of SWP that past protestors are tiring of parading and are more interested in festival than political indoctrination and finally, past massing of bodies has accomplished little. The WSA watchword is impatience and they embrace a "multi-issue tactic." Not only should America's Vietnam shin be kicked (including ROTC and military research) but also racism, repression, male chauvinism, imperialism, ecological pollution, etc., etc.

This major split in the antiwar left was underlined the following week at Milwaukee. At a Strategy Action Conference staged there by the New Mobe (who the Student Mobe calls "a bunch of generals without an army") several events occurred among hectic debate and auto-disruption (like the Cleveland meeting and all others in recent months, when petty chiefs are brought together no one wants to be an Indian) that were not widely noted in the straight press. First, under the influence of Rennie Davis, Ron Young and numerous other violence-prone activists, the conference (like the WSA posture at Cleveland) turned away from the now traditional mass demonstration technique. Among the future antiwar activities that will be considered at forthcoming planning sessions are deliberate blockage of transportation, electrical and communication systems and other acts of "civil disobedience" (translated probably as police confrontation). The New Mobe is also at odds with the totally unrelated Student Mobe and plans to follow a multi-issue offensive. This philosophy is certainly a quid pro quo deal in order to build a bigger total force for disruption. For the first time, and this is the major significant point to emerge from Milwaukee, a large and generally respectable group among American Negroes has joined the fray. Ralph Abernathy has apparently committed Martin King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference to the field of antiwarism and has extracted in return New Mobe support and probably a promise of activism in SCLC pet programs. Among the issues now under attack by New Mobesters are racism, repression, equality, etc. New Mobe leaders have further adulterated pure antiwarism by their pledge to the National Welfare Rights Organization that they will support their demand for a minimum income for a family of four to something in excess of \$5,000 a year.

In summary, unity has been breached along a broad and widening front. The schism can be expected to continue and much energy previously directed against American democratic order will now be spent on factionalism as history and tradition of political extremism again repeats. The true forces at play are the varied shades and doctrines of international communism (resplendent with the usual array of suckers and dupes) with an added American flavor. The war, though critically important as a short range hub of radicalism from the left, is in fact only a spoke in the long haul revolutionary wheel of the continuing battle to interdict the path of democratic freedom.